



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

LOS ANGELES WOMAN PLEADS GUILTY TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING FOR BRINGING NIECE TO U.S. TO WORK AS PROSTITUTE

LOS ANGELES - A West Los Angeles woman pleaded guilty this afternoon to a federal human trafficking charge for bringing her niece into the United States and forcing her to work as a prostitute.

Alena Okhotina, 35, pleaded guilty to one count of trafficking into servitude, an offense that carries a potential penalty of 20 years in federal prison. The charges are the result of a joint investigation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Office of Inspector General for the United States Department of Labor, and the Los Angeles Police Department.

According to a plea agreement filed today, in January 2003, the Russian national paid for a ticket for her 18-year-old niece to fly from Russia to Los Angeles. When the teenager arrived in Los Angeles, she lived with Okhotina at her apartment. Soon after, Okhotina took possession of her niece's passport and told her that she would have to work as a prostitute.

Okhotina coerced her niece to work as a prostitute by telling her that she would be arrested if she went to the police because she was here in the United States illegally. Okhotina also told the niece that if she left the apartment, or if Okhotina made her leave the apartment, she would have no place to stay and would be on the street.

As a result of this coercion, the teenager engaged in prostitution in California and Las Vegas, Nevada. Okhotina took the money that her niece received for prostituting herself.

"Human trafficking crimes such as this victimize the vulnerable people in our society," said United States Attorney Debra Wong Yang. "With the formation earlier this year of the Los Angeles Metropolitan Area Task Force on Human Trafficking, we are honing our tactics for identifying and rescuing trafficking victims, as well as prosecuting those responsible for human trafficking."

Okhotina also admitted in her plea agreement that she obstructed justice by sending letters and making telephone calls from jail in which she attempted to influence how witnesses would testify at her trial in this case.

“Sex trafficking is one of the vilest forms of exploitation and the fact that someone would inflict this kind of suffering on their own flesh and blood is unconscionable,” said Los Angeles ICE special agent-in-charge Loraine Brown. “ICE is working closely with the other members of the Los Angeles Metropolitan Area Task Force on Human Trafficking to ensure that those who engage in this reprehensible practice are brought to justice and pay the price.”

Okhotina is scheduled to be sentenced April 12. The government and the defendant have agreed that the sentence should be either 18 or 21 months in prison. This agreement takes into account the fact that Okhotina previously served more than 26 months in state prison after being convicted of pandering in relation to her niece's work as a prostitute.

“This case is an example of how multi-agency cooperation toward a common goal can lead to successful prosecution,” said FBI Assistant Director in Charge J. Stephen Tidwell. “The FBI will continue to work with our partners on the task force to combat human trafficking.”

The case was jointly prosecuted by the United States Attorney's Office and the Civil Rights Division of the United States Department of Justice.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.